

CATON HOUSE, Old Town,
known as
CARROLL HOUSE, Baltimore.
BALTIMORE CITY Co.

HABS
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14.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
John H. Scarff, District Officer
1012 Keyser Bldg., Baltimore, Maryland

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CATON HOUSE
King George Street and Stillhouse Alley
Old Town
Known as Carroll House, Lombard & Front Sts.
Baltimore, Maryland.

OWNER: City of Baltimore

DATE OF ERECTION: about 1823

ARCHITECT: Unknown

BUILDER: Unknown

PRESENT CONDITION: Good

NUMBER OF STORIES: Three and one-half, and cellar

MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION: Brick, stone foundation,
wood interior and roof
construction.

EXISTING RECORDS: Life of Charles Carroll by
Kate Rowland.

Correspondence of Charles Carroll
of Carrollton.

Files of the Land Record Office.

CATON HOUSE

Baltimore, Maryland.

HISTORICAL DATA:

Cole's Harbor, a farm of about 550 acres was surveyed for Thomas Cole August 28, 1668, and patented to him September 4, 1668, "to be held in free and common socage, by fealty only; for all manner of services, yielding and paying therefore yearly unto his heirs, at our receipt of St. Maries, at the two most usual feasts of the year, viz: at the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the Feast of St. Michael, the Archangel, by even and equal portions, the rent of eleven shillings sterling in silver or gold." This tract extended along a harbor at the forks of the Patapsco River for a mile, thence backward about half a mile and was divided into nearly equal parts by the stream afterwards known as Jones's Falls. This is the land upon which the center of Baltimore now stands.

In February 1698, James Todd obtained a warrant for Cole's Harbor and had the tract resurveyed which then proved to contain but 510 acres and had it patented to him June 1, 1700 under the name of "Todd's Range" at a rent of ten shillings and two and a half pence per year. In June 1701, James Todd and wife conveyed to Charles Carroll "all the residue of "Todd's Range", a portion having previously been sold.

Baltimore Town was founded in 1729 on the west side of Jones's Falls, and Old or "Jones's Town" occupied the land to the east of the Falls where nearby, David Jones had taken up land as early as 1661. The first lot in Old Town was taken up July 20, 1733. The lots were all sold shortly after 1741, but a good many lots in Baltimore Town at that date were still in the hands of the commissioners. In 1745, by act of the Assembly, the two towns were incorporated into one entire town and for the future known as Baltimore Town.

CATON HOUSE

HISTORICAL DATA:

Charles Carroll died in 1781, possessing land in Old Town, and his son, known to history as Charles Carroll of Carrollton, born in 1737 in Annapolis, came into the property. The son was a man of great wealth and influence throughout a long life. He lived to be the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, and died in 1832 in this house, the Residence of his son-in-law, Richard Caton, who had married in 1787 his oldest daughter Mary. The house at the corner of Lombard and Front Streets is known to almost everyone as The Carroll House, although all evidence existing indicates his son-in-law built it and together with his wife owned it as long as they both lived.

Richard Caton came to this country from Liverpool in 1775, an unknown man of 22 years. One year later, he married Mary Carroll who was then 16 years old. The marriage was opposed by Charles Carroll and as long as he lived he was many times called upon to make good the losses incurred by his son-in-law in his business transactions. In 1821, Charles Carroll deeded the land at the corner of King George Street and Stillhouse Alley to his daughter in trust and in 1824, The Baltimore Directory gives this address for the business and residence of Richard Caton. In April 1823, Charles Carroll assumed the unpaid balance of \$9850.00 of an original \$20,000 that Caton had borrowed "for the house he occupies at the intersection of King George and Stillhouse Streets." We can thus assign the year 1823 as the approximate date of the building of the house. (Twenty years earlier in 1803, Charles Carroll had built "Homewood" in Baltimore County, as a house for his son Charles.) Each year Carroll spent six months at the house of his daughter Mrs. Caton, coming in with a retinue of slaves from Doughoregan Manor, and he made it his permanent home from 1827 to his death in 1832.

The education of Charles Carroll of Carrollton he himself describes in a letter to one Joseph Delaplaine, Editor of the Repository, dated from Doughoregan, August 21, 1816:

CATON HOUSE

HISTORICAL DATA:

Letter to Mr. Joseph Delaplaine,
Editor of the Repository.

Doughoregan Manor - Aug. 21, 1816

Sir:

I received this day your letter of the 28th past, and the first half volume of your Repository, for which I hope my agent, Mr. James Neilson, in Baltimore, has accounted with your agent Mr. Philson. My letter of the 6th instant in answer to Mr. King's of the 29th of July, informed him I should be in Baltimore about the 20th December and remain there during the winter where I will sit to him for my portrait at any place in that city he may appoint.

I was born at Annapolis in September 1737; on the 19th of next month I shall enter my 80th year. I was sent by my father when about 11 years of age to St. Omer's for my education, where I remained about 6 years; from thence I went, by his direction, to a college a year, I went to the College of Louis the Grand at Paris; in all of these Colleges the students were taught by the Jesuites.

In 1758 or 1759, I went to England and studied law in the Inner Temple 3 or 4 years, not with a professional view; and I returned to my native country in 1765, after an absence of about 18 years.

On the breaking out of our revolution, I took a decided part in support of the rights of this country; was elected a member of the Committee off Safety established by the legislature; was a member of the Convention which formed the constitution of the State. The journals of Congress will show how long I was a member of that body during the revolution.

With Franklin and Mr. Samuel Chase, I was appointed a Commissioner of Canada. I was elected a member of the Senate at the first session of Congress under the present Confederation:- though well acquainted with General Washington, and I flatter myself in his confidence, few letters passed between us; one, having reference to the oppo-

CATON HOUSE

HISTORICAL DATA:

sition made to the Treaty concluded by Mr. Jay, has been repeatedly published in the newspapers, and perhaps you may have seen it; that letter is no longer in my possession.

My Grandfather came to Maryland in the year preceeding the revolution in England, terminated by the dethronement of James the Second. My mother was daughter of Mr. Clement Brooke, a gentleman of respectable family in Prince George's County. I have given you sir in compliance with your request all the incidents of my public life and of my education, and remain, with respect.

Your most humble servant,

Charles Carroll of Carrollton.

Under all the circumstances it seems most likely that his wishes and taste were duly considered in the planning and execution of his son-in-law's house. Caton himself says the house would not have been so large except for the fact that his father-in-law with his servants insisted upon spending a large part of each year with him. Certainly the best of everything that the times produced was known and enjoyed by the occupants of the home. In 1824, on the occasion of Gen. Lafayette's visit to Baltimore, Carroll came there to welcome the great Frenchman. From this house he went to lay the corner stone of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1828. At his death in 1832, he lay in state in the west chamber in the main floor and was carried thence, followed by a long cortege, to his last resting place at Doughoregan. The Richards Catons had four beautiful daughters who all married English men; Mary Ann in 1825, The Marquis of Wellesley; Louisa Catherine-the Seventh Duke of Leeds; Elizabeth became Baroness Stafford; and the youngest, Emily, married Mr. John MacTavish, The British Consul in Baltimore.

The old residence on Lombard Street was held in trust estate of Mary Caton and in 1856, it passed from Emily MacTavish to the Sisters of Mercy who in turn sold it in 1871 to Jacob Seeger. In 1903 Jacob Seeger sold it to Thomas Hisky, who in 1914 sold it to the City of Baltimore, and the same year a bronze tablet was erected on the Lombard Street elevation with this inscription:

CATON HOUSE

HISTORICAL DATA:

The inscription:

"Charles Carroll
of
Carrollton
1737 - 1832
Last Surviving Signer of The
Declaration of Independence
And Son Of
Charles Carroll
From Whom The Site Of Baltimore Town
Was Purchased 1729
Owned This House And Here He Died
November 14, 1832
In The 96th Year Of His Age
This Property Was Purchased
And Restored By The City Of Baltimore
In The Year Of The
National Star-Spangled Banner Centennial
1914"

Prior to its purchase by the city the old building knew many vicissitudes. It was for many years a tenement and work shop. The building is now being repaired by the W.P.A. for use as a local settlement house. Exact original details around main entrance are unknown. All indications point to an original balcony at the second floor. The present cornice is excellent and in character, but it is sheet metal. The main stair detail is poor. The curve of the hand rail is uneven and it would seem that it is of a late date. The small rear stairs are better. An old neighbor says the gables at one time had a parapet capped in marble. The chimneys were struck by lightning and have been rebuilt. Mantels have disappeared from all the important rooms, but evidence indicates they were of marble. The cellar contains a strange vaulted room, with what seems to be firing slots and the ~~two~~ entrances still have heavy iron pintals embedded in the jambs. Local legend has it that this room was connected by an underground passage with the outside. The Room on the left of the main entrance, ground floor, has an old (but added) brick vault with an iron door. This room is believed to be Richard Caton's counting room. At one time the house had a wing to the north and there were out buildings all of which have completely disappeared.

John H. Scarff

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